

**TOP SECRET**

CIA 36032

15 FEB 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR: DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE, GENERAL STAFF,  
UNITED STATES ARMY

SUBJECT: Proposed Watch Committee

REFERENCE: Memorandum of 20 January 1950, ID/CSUSA to DCI,  
File CSOED-1 WH 319.26, information copies of which  
were sent to the other members of the IAC by the  
Army.

1. As requested in the above reference, I am giving consideration to the several questions raised therein about the production of national intelligence on Soviet intentions with a view towards having further clarifying discussions on them in the near future.

2. It seems to me that there are joined together in your proposal two different functions which should be separate, as pointed out below. There also appears to be a misconception of the duties of CIA and the Intelligence Advisory Committee agencies in crisis situations. These three points are listed below and discussed in the comments that follow:

(1) The working level Check List network has been established to provide timely warning, through the use of certain indicators, of impending Soviet military action in the near future -- as described in my detailed circular memorandum of December 7th clarified by my letter to Mr. Armstrong dated January 26th; after the members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee had appointed their representatives requested in my circular memorandum of September 26th.

(2) Rounded intelligence estimates of the present Soviet position and future courses of action, i.e., long range estimates for planning and policy making, are produced in the day-to-day work by CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates, coordinated with the other intelligence agencies under NSCID 3 and DCI 3/1 and 3/2, and by the periodic ad hoc interdepartmental committees under the chairmanship of [ ] in CIA which have prepared two or three estimates during the past year or so and are now working on another.

(3) "Furnishing Intelligence Advisory Committee with such crisis intelligence as required by Intelligence Advisory Committee to discharge its responsibility, as set forth in paragraph 6, NSCID 1." The DCI prepares national intelligence not only on crisis situations but on other matters, and not only for the members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee but also for the President and the NSC et al. This

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is his responsibility by law. The responsibility of the members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee is to get intelligence support from their respective agencies and to give it and their advice to the Director of Central Intelligence, not just vice versa. The only change from past procedures in the new paragraph 6 of NSCID 1 is quicker action and on a higher level than is customary.

COMMENTS

3. In consideration of the problem of the production of intelligence on Soviet intentions, I believe that a necessity exists to provide for separate mechanisms (1) for the treatment of "indications of intentions" and the short-range evaluations resulting from a consideration of these indicators, and (2) for the longer-range composite "rounded intelligence estimates" of the present Soviet position and probable future courses of action, which require preparation against the broadest possible terms of reference.

4. With regard to the "Check List," I am inclined to agree that the presently constituted "Check List Group" could be more formally established by action of the members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee if they wish, and that the name "Check List Group" could be changed to "Watch Committee."

5. It is my firm conviction, however, that this Committee should not be diverted from the important task of focusing the attention of analysts, in CIA and in the agencies of the Intelligence Advisory Committee members, on certain indicators or actions contained in the Check List by engaging in long-range strategic estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions.

6. There have been numerous difficulties attendant upon the establishment of effective operations of the "Check List Group," some of which will be overcome by the formalization of this Group as a "Watch Committee" but the remainder of which can be overcome only by fullest interdepartmental cooperation and support. It is urgently requested, therefore, that, in this interim period, every effort be made to overcome internal and external obstacles to the effective fulfillment of the "Check List Group" mission. It is important that there be regular Check List meetings and that priority be given within each Department to consideration of Check List operations. With reference to your comments in the introduction to paragraph 2 of your Tab A, Tab A herewith shows the recent activities of the Check List Group.

7. With regard to the rounded intelligence estimates, I should think that most of the intelligence agencies presumably are devoting most of their entire daily efforts to this large subject -- "to analyze intelligence information relating to short and long range Soviet intentions to go to war and to produce periodic intelligence estimates on this subject as it affects national security." I should think an additional committee

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for this purpose would be unnecessary and that the same results could be accomplished by new instructions through the existing machinery of the agencies concerned. However, if the other intelligence agencies think that they can contribute best through another interdepartmental committee, on Soviet intentions, this could be arranged. It would produce the periodic long-range comprehensive estimates of Soviet intentions and probable future courses of action against a regional and global background, and would insure that existing estimates on this subject would be continuously maintained in current status, be published at appropriate intervals, and be responsive to changes in the situation as revealed by the activities of the "Check List" or "Watch Committee."

8. The Army statements in paragraph 2b of its Tab A "Comments" appear to mean that the Army's most capable analysts are not engaged in the ordinary coordination procedures on the national intelligence estimates produced under NSCIB 3 and DCI 3/1, but would engage in activities of a permanent committee producing well rounded estimates in lieu of the ad hoc committees which have met two or three times in the past year or so. The Army's other statements in that paragraph 2b appear to be inconsistent with Section 1a of NSCIB No. 3.

9. Accordingly, I am preparing for circulation to the Intelligence Advisory Committee agencies at an early date two draft interdepartmental Operating Procedures proposing to formalize the "Watch Committee" and the "Committee on Soviet Intentions" with their respective responsibilities based on the different principles cited above. It is thought best that these matters be discussed further on the working level before they are referred to a meeting of the Intelligence Advisory Committee.

Signed

R. H. HILLANKOETTER  
Rear Admiral, USN  
Director of Central  
Intelligence

cc: IAC Members (Of whom  
only State, Army, Navy,  
and Air Force are the  
participating members)

Enclosure:  
Tab A - Chronology of CIA  
Activities on the Check  
List Operation

DISTRIBUTION:  
Executive  
AD/ORA

Advisory Council  
DCI  
Return to COAPS  
TS Control

COAPS:PC:amy-15 Feb 50

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**TAB A**

**CHRONOLOGY**

**of**

**CIA ACTIVITIES ON THE CHECK LIST OPERATION**

November 1949	Proposal first circulated, for limited use.
19 August 1949	State inquired at IAC meeting re a Watch Committee.
22 August to 9 September 1949	Preparation of draft memorandum issued by DCI 26 September 1949.
12 September 1949	Approval of draft memorandum by DCI.
15 September to 26 September 1949	Interviews with top members of IAC intelligence staffs to explain nature, operations, limitations of Check List.
26 September 1949	DCI issues memorandum to IAC members
30 September to 13 October 1949	Check List Officers nominated by IAC agencies.
14 October to 1 November 1949	Internal procedures set up in CIA and Check List needs discussed with CIA Offices (OSO, OPC, OSI)
7 November 1949	Request sent to all IAC Check List Officers for summaries of available information bearing on Check List indicators falling logically under their purview. This request had a deadline 18 November, shortly after which a meeting was to be held.
7 November to 15 November 1949	Check List Officers nominated by CIA Offices.
19 November to 29 November 1949	Reports received from Army and Navy; none from State and Air - in answer to Memo of Nov. 7.
5 December 1949	First Check List meeting; basic objectives and informal allocations of primary responsibility discussed, among other things; next meeting set for 11 January 1950
7 December	Memo to Participating agencies.
8 December to 13 December 1949	Interviews with various Check List Officers to discuss possibility of a "Christmas Flap"; all agreed little likelihood.
13 December 1949	Memorandum prepared as consensus of Check List opinion that "no flap" was expected -- held for use in case an apparent "flap" began during the holidays.
14 December 1949 to 3 January 1950	Holidays; one or more Check List Officers were gone during this period
11 January 1950	Meeting postponed due to non-receipt of scientific indicators from OSI for inclusion in the Check List.
17 January 1950	Meeting again postponed because revised Check List including OSI's contributions not yet completed. At the time of both these postponements all Check List Officers were contacted and none saw as crisis brewing that would have required a meeting without the new Check List.

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26 January

Clarifying letter to Mr. Armstrong

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